

USPEE „CONSTANTIN STERE” PARTICIPATES IN THE THIRD TRAINING WITHIN THE ENRICHER – HUBS PROJECT, ORGANIZED IN COMRAT

As part of the Erasmus+ project, ENRICHER - hubs initiative „Designing Green Tourism Concepts through Learning”, the third training session for academic staff took place under the theme „*Service Design in Action: Experimental Teaching Methods and Tools for Enhancing Competence in Green Tourism (Case Study: Design Sprint)*”. The event was held from January 21–24, 2025, at Comrat State University, Republic of Moldova.



On the first day, participants conducted interviews with local experts and representatives from the tourism sector in Gagauzia. These interviews took place at the Gagauz Sofrasi Ethno-Tourism Complex, which is interested in implementing the **ENRICHER hubs project**. The invited experts included Irina Odnostalko, Maria Kara (Tourism Development Department, Executive Committee of the Gagauz Autonomous Territorial Unit); Svetlana Gradinar (Head of the Department of Regional Policy and External Relations, Regional Development Agency of the Gagauz Autonomous Territorial Unit); Liubovi Mitiglo (Tekwill, ICT hub); Valentina Kaledji (NGO „Pro-Europe”); Larisa Statova (Director of the travel agency „Lara Tour”); and Anna Statova (Founder and Director of the Gagauz Sofrasi Ethno-Tourism Complex).



The discussions focused on collecting primary data regarding the tourism sector and the challenges faced by tourism businesses in Moldova, including those specific to the Gagauz Sofrasi Ethno-Tourism Complex. The experts also shared positive practices and unique experiences and talked about ongoing tourism-related projects in Gagauzia.



The data gathered during these meetings played a crucial role in deepening the participants' understanding of the tourism sector in Moldova, including the Gagauzia region. Training participants, who worked in groups, had the opportunity to analyze in detail the challenges and issues faced by the tourism sector as a whole and by specific categories of service providers. This collaborative approach enabled the identification of innovative solutions, which were then shaped into specific projects addressing the current needs of the industry. An important focus of the discussions was the sustainability of the proposed projects. Participants emphasized the importance of creating initiatives that would ensure not only short-term success but also long-term positive impacts on the environment and local communities. Thus, sustainability was placed at the core of the future development of the tourism sector. Another key point was the integration of green tourism technologies. These were seen as essential for creating responsible and eco-friendly tourism that minimizes environmental impact.

On the last day of the training, each team of 5–6 participants presented the results of their work, showcasing their ideas and demonstrating how the tourism sector could develop through the implementation of modern practices, taking into account the experiences of service providers. All five projects presented by participants considered the interests of potential tourists in learning about Gagauz culture, traditions, and the opportunity to take part in workshops and other tourism activities. The ideas were evaluated by experts, and each team had three minutes to present their project and highlight its most advantageous features. Participants also voted for the best project. The winners received awards from the trainers, and all participants received feedback from experts and trainers regarding the strengths and weaknesses of each project.



Experts, including professionals from the tourism industry, noted new, often unconventional, perspectives on the potential for local and regional tourism development. Larisa Statova, director of the „Lara Tour” agency and co-owner of the Gagauz Sofrasi Ethno-Tourism Complex, evaluated the projects from a practical standpoint, sharing her views on the feasibility of implementing the proposed ideas at Gagauz Sofrasi.



Thus, through these projects and the integration of green technology solutions, the tourism sector in Moldova could evolve toward sustainable development, with long-term benefits for both the economy and the environment.



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